

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
September 16, 2003**

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Approval of the August 20, 2003 minutes deferred to the October 15, 2003 meeting.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY REPORT

Secretary MacDonald briefed the Commission regarding the status of the Hood Canal Bridge graving-dock site. The Department is investigating an archaeological find at the site and has submitted an extended site assessment to the Tribal Council for approval. The Department and tribe are working closely together to determine the next step. The tribe has expressed concerns about the appropriate treatment of the remains retrieved from the site. An agreement is currently being negotiated with the tribe for the disposition of the artifacts. Secretary MacDonald expressed that the Department's strategy is to be respectful of the tribe's cultural beliefs.

Chris Christopher, State Maintenance Engineer, briefed the Commission regarding the Rocky Mountain Maintenance Scanning Tour hosted this year by Washington State. The tour consisted of viewing a variety of maintenance equipment and sites.

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, briefed the Commission regarding the Transportation Efficiencies Act (TEA21). Congress came to a tentative agreement to continue TEA21 for five months. There are issues surrounding the appropriations bill that still need to be resolved.

Colleen Jollie, Tribal Liaison, briefed the Commission regarding the Tribal Conference held in Yakima, September 8-10, 2003. Ms. Jollie stated that 20 tribes were represented at the conference which focused mainly on policy, planning and transportation issues.

Secretary MacDonald provided an update regarding the current status of communication with the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID). Chair Davis commented on Commissioner Kargianis's concerns regarding the Commission and Department's involvement in the RTID's consideration of tolling in their funding package.

Secretary MacDonald explained that the Department would host eight focus groups to aid in facilitating traffic movement. These groups will talk with citizens about how this program would be designed. There will also be opportunities for citizens to express their feelings regarding tolls and the Department in general.

2004 WSDOT SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET REQUEST

Bill Ford, Budget Chief, Budget Services, presented the 2004 Supplemental Budget Proposal to the Commission for approval. Mr. Ford explained that the 2004 Supplemental Budget amends the 2003-05 budget and results in a \$5.7 million reduction to the Department's budget. Analysis of the budget reduction by program and account results in a projected positive balance of approximately \$6.0 million in the Motor Vehicle Account; \$1.0 million in the Transportation 2003 Account (Nickel Account); and \$12.0 million in the Multimodal Transportation Account. Project ending balances will continue to be monitored and updated during the next several months.

Commissioner Marr asked if this budget proposal reflects the \$9.3 million for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Mr. Ford replied that yes it does include a small portion of TNB funding, but he will check on it and let him know. Commissioner Marr also inquired about the distribution of funds for the preservation of the Murray Morgan Bridge.

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, stated that the Department planned to remove the bridge. There is local support for restoring the bridge. The Department is currently in discussion with the City of Tacoma regarding options.

Commissioner Niva asked why the bridge has not been removed or restored. Paula responded that the funds were not available.

Amy Arnis, Co-Director, Strategic Planning & Programming, commented that the funding is dedicated and must be used for a project in the area. She indicated that the issues need to be resolved or the opportunity to obtain funding for the project would pass and the funding would be reappropriated within the project area.

Paula asked if the decision package should be changed to reflect that discussions are underway and that the decision to refurbish or remove the bridge has not been made.

Commissioner Niva indicated that she wants the decision made.

Chair Davis stated that the local community has not made a decision as to refurbish or remove the bridge.

Commissioner Marr asked when action to dedicated funds would need to be taken.

Paula responded that the Department had planned to remove the bridge and therefore they have not undertaken preservation activities. If the City of Tacoma is seeking additional funds it may take awhile. She stated that there is an urgency to make a decision due to the condition of the bridge.

Secretary MacDonald commented that if the bridge is to be preserved it is for historic value not transportation value. Funding to preserve the bridge will need to come from the people that want the bridge historically preserved. He stated that Representative Dennis Flannigan is working to obtain funding for preservation of the bridge.

Commissioners inquired about stormwater collection fees for highway runoff. It was determined that more information on the subject is needed. Ms. Hammond stated that the Department would brief the Commission at a future meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Maher and seconded by Commissioner Barnes to adopt Resolution No. 654, the Department of Transportation's 2004 Supplemental Budget Proposal, and forward it to the Office of Financial Management and the Legislature.

AGENCY REQUEST LEGISLATION

Don Griffith, Director, Legislative & Strategic Management Relations, presented an overview of the proposed 2004 Agency Request Legislation to the Commission. Prior to each legislative session the Department makes suggestions for essential or highly desirable changes in law that would contribute to the operation of the Department. The Department will request the Commission's approval of the agency request legislation package in October 2003.

David Pope, Toll Systems Manager, Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB), briefed the Commission regarding proposed legislation authorizing more specific electronic toll collection on the TNB. The proposed change provides minor clarification of current law to define state of the art electronic toll collection (ETC) and enforcement methods of toll collection violations.

Bill Henselman, Risk Manager, Finance and Administration, briefed the Commission regarding proposed Departmental legislation that could recover from negligent drivers the cost of damages to its highways, bridges and other facilities. This legislation impacts any state highway accident causing negligent parties and/or their insurers to be clearly responsible for this redefined damage element of traffic control.

Commissioner Kargianis explained his concerns with the language used in the legislation. He suggested that it be refined to be more explicit. Mr. Henselman stated that they would look at the language.

Mr. Griffith briefed the Commission regarding proposed Departmental legislation that would allow for Wahkiakum County to provide toll free ferry service when bridges are closed. Current law allows Puget Island Ferry to provide toll free service when SR 4 is closed. The Department is proposing that the language be expanded to allow for toll free operation when the Longview Rainier or Astoria Meglar Bridges are closed due to emergency conditions and there are no other reasonably short optional routes. The Commission requested additional information prior to making a decision in October.

Commissioner Marr commented on the issues surrounding studded tires. He stated that this issue should be revisited and questioned why the Department is not requesting legislation to ban studded tires.

It was moved by Commissioner Niva and seconded by Commissioner Kargianis that the Commission will direct the Department to prepare agency proposed legislation to ban the use of studded tires on state highways. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Griffith stated that he would prepare draft legislation along with a summary of other state's approaches to studded tire issues. He will make a presentation to the Commission at the October 2003 meeting.

UPDATE ON EFFICIENCIES BILL (SSB 5248)

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, provided an update on SSB 5248. The purpose was to advise the Commission of the work plan to address the legislative initiatives contained in the Transportation Efficiencies Bill (SSB 5248). This briefing covered only local government reporting requirements to the Commission and Department.

The new law requires that during the 2003-2005 biennium, cities and towns shall provide the Commission with preservation rating information on at least 70 percent of the total city and town arterial network. Thereafter, preservation reporting requirements shall increase by five percent increments in subsequent biennia. The rating system used by cities and towns must be based upon the Washington State pavement rating method or an equivalent standard approved by the Commission.

The proposed process for implement of the program will include a survey of cities to document their rating systems; establish a workgroup of cities and comparison of rating systems with the Washington State pavement rating method; work with cities to develop a reporting process; develop a draft report for presentation to the Commission; and assist cities with identifying and overcoming reporting roadblocks.

Jay Weber, Director, County Road Administration Board (CRAB), commented briefly regarding the County's plan to implement the new pavement rating reporting functions to the Commission.

HONORARY NAMING OF SR 16 NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL

Randy Hain, Administrator, Olympic Region, presented Resolution No. 655 to the Commission requesting an honorary naming of the SR 16 Non-Motorized Trail. The portion of the trail that runs from Sprague Avenue to Stone Drive on the west side of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge will be the "Scott Pierson Trail" and the segment that runs from Union Avenue to Snake Lake Bridge will be "Scott's Way". Mr. Pierson devoted 23 years as a public servant creating a functional and attractive non-motorized transportation system for pedestrians and bicyclists in urban Tacoma. Ben Pierson expressed his appreciation of the resolution to his father. He shared memories of his father's participation in many projects and his vision of alternative transportation choices and creating a better environment.

It was moved by Commissioner Niva and seconded by Commissioner Maher to adopt Resolution No. 655 naming the SR 16 Non-Motorized Trail from Sprague Avenue to Stone Drive the “Scott Pierson Trail” and Union Avenue to Snake Lake Bridge “Scott’s Way”. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Hammond, John Conrad and Mike Thorne thanked Commissioner Niva for her many years of contributions to the Commission and transportation.

Meta Heller, representative of the Washington Senior Citizen Lobby and liaison to Washington Highway Users, expressed her member’s concerns with the studies performed by tax reform groups.

WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES QUARTERLY REPORT

Scott Davis, Safety Systems Manager, Washington State Ferries (WSF), provided an update on WSF security initiatives. The Department submitted significant comments to the United States Coast Guard regarding the security measures requirements, specifically passenger and vehicle screening. WSF’s primary goal is to implement an effective security plan that retains WSF as a fast and efficient marine highway system. As a result of a state budget deficit and cuts to operating costs there are limited resources to devote to the implementation of security measures. WSF believes that the scope of requirements will likely prevent full compliance with the extremely aggressive time frame stipulated. WSF intends to pursue alternative compliance, through the development of a unique risk based security plan for the ferries.

Mike Thorne, CEO, Washington State Ferries (WSF), provided an update on the current operations and financial performance of WSF for the year and biennium ending June 30, 2003 along with a look at fiscal year 2004. The briefing included revenue and ridership trends achieved in fiscal year 2003 and early trends in fiscal year 2004; the current status on implementing new revenue including the Request for Proposal (RFP) for new food concessions; the redevelopment of Pier 52; and advertising and parking lots.

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (WTP) UPDATE

Charlie Howard, Director, Strategic Planning & Programming and Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, Policy Development & Regional Coordination, provided an update on the status of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP). The process is underway with the development of a work plan that consists of five preliminary work reports to be followed by a planning process that is still evolving. The Department presented the preliminary concept to five Metropolitan Planning Organization Directors, the Washington Transit Association and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council Director. There will be an internal advisory group formed that will be the sounding board on update matters, as well as be an important component of the Department’s communications network on the WTP.

It was moved by Commissioner Niva and seconded by Commissioner Maher to endorse the first phase for the Washington Transportation Plan update process. The motion was approved unanimously.

APPROACH TO URBAN AREAS CONGESTION RELIEF ANALYSIS

Michael Cummings, Manager, Urban Planning Office and Shuming Yan, Urban Planning Office, provided a briefing regarding the Department's approach to the Congestion Relief Study for the Puget Sound, Spokane and Vancouver metropolitan areas. The Department will lead and staff the project with support from the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), transit agencies and consultants. It is envisioned that the final product will include a summary of the background information that includes legislative requirements and the Growth Management Act (GMA) plans. The analysis will focus on answering questions such as what does it take (in terms of cost and impact) to achieve a particular level/s of congestion relief. The Commission will be briefed at major milestones of the study.

WSDOT TOLLING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (RTID)

Michael Cummings, Manager, Urban Planning Office, briefed the Commission regarding the Regional Transportation Investment District's (RTID) incorporation of proposed toll projects into their finance plans as a source of revenue for SR 520 Bridge Project, SR 509, Alaskan Way Viaduct, I 405 and SR 167 on the ballot.

Chair Davis distributed a letter written to the RTID for approval by the Commission, indicating that the Commission as the tolling authority and the Department as the operator will be the primary implementer of any voter approved RTID ballot measure that includes tolls on state highways. The Commission supports tolls, in general, as a tool to improve the efficiency of the state transportation system and to help fund investments of critically needed projects. The Commission agreed to send a letter to the RTID establishing a position to include tolling as part of the financing plan for the SR 520 Bridge, removing tolling revenues from the financing plan on the Alaskan Way Viaduct and continuing the analysis of HOT lane options including conversion of existing HOV lanes on I 405 and SR 167.

It was moved by Commissioner Kargianis and seconded by Commissioner Niva to send a letter to the Regional Transportation Investment District establishing a position to continue to include tolling as part of the financing plan and to further analyze the appropriate toll rates on the SR 520 Bridge project. Motion approved with Commissioners Davis, Marr, Niva, Maher, Kargianis, Barnes voting yes and Commissioner Forner voting no.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Maher reported that she attended the Public Transportation and Commute Options Conference and a West Coast Corridor Roundtable.

Commissioner Barnes reported that he attended the Public Transportation and

Commute Options Conference. He also met with labor groups in the Portland/Vancouver area promoting family wage jobs.

Commissioner Marr reported that he met with WSDOT staff regarding the Washington Transportation Plan. He commented on his involvement with local transportation projects in Spokane area.

Commissioner Niva indicated that she had given most her report throughout the meeting.

Commissioner Kargianis reported that he attended the Eastside Transportation Council meeting. He commented on the council's support of the RTID plan.

Commissioner Forner reported that she attended AASHTO's annual conference that focused on TEA21 and alternative funding.

Chair Davis reported that he attended the 2003 State Tribal Conference. He commented that the conference was very informative. Chair Davis briefly commented on the WSF RFPs. He explained that he has spent a significant amount of time working with the Department and the RTID on tolling issues.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m., on September 16, 2003.